

CAPSULE SUMMARY

BA-2205

Back River United Methodist Church

544 Back River Neck Road

Baltimore, Baltimore County

1928

Private

The Back River United Methodist Church was constructed in 1928 in the vicinity of Essex on the Middle River Neck east of Baltimore City and is representative of the suburban development of eastern Baltimore County. The land to the east of Baltimore remained predominantly rural through the mid-19th century, and historic atlases indicate that the town of Essex consisted of farmland occupied by B.E. Cook in 1877. The majority of the land was owned, however, by members of the Taylor family. Eastern and Mace Avenues were unimproved through the late 19th century across the Back River Neck between the Back and Middle Rivers. In the early 20th century, the land between Baltimore and the Middle River was still largely agrarian. At this time, a streetcar line extended to the northeast from Baltimore along Eastern Avenue. The community known as Essex was born in 1908 out of the development of land near the intersection of Eastern and Mace Avenues by the Taylor Land Company. The first dwelling constructed in the newly developed town was constructed shortly thereafter. Although schools, public services and religious institutions were established in Essex in the 1910s, the community's growth did not increase rapidly. The 1915 county atlas indicates that few structures existed on the city blocks created by the Taylor Land Company's survey of the area. The town's development accelerated after the 1919 establishment of the Eastern Rolling Mill near the Essex community. The mill quickly became one of the primary employers in the area around the Back River. Worker housing quickly sprang up on the undeveloped lots that were part of the Paradise Resurveyed plat. Essex was slated for continued growth through World War II and the post-war period.

Built in 1928, this church fronts east with a parish hall to the northwest and is surrounded by a paved parking lot. Standing two-stories high and three-bays-wide this rock-faced concrete structure has a three-story tower projecting from the façade. The third story of the square tower is wood frame and pierced with two pointed-arch louvered vents on all four sides. The first-story of the tower contains the main entry with a Colonial Revival door hood that is pedimented. The double-leaf wood door is paneled with lights with molded wood surrounds and stained glass transom. Two 1/1 windows pierce the façade of the main block with flat concrete lintels and concrete lug sills. In the end of the asphalt-shingled front gable roof is a half-round louvered vent. The four-bay-deep church is divided with buttresses. Piercing the wide eaves are two exterior-end brick chimneys. A one-story ell spans the width of the rear elevation and features a stepped parapet roof. Located to the northwest is a circa 1928 parish hall with a circa 1950 addition.

Maryland Historical Trust

Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. BA-2205

1. Name of Property

(indicate preferred name)

historic Back River United Methodist Church (preferred)

other

2. Location

street and number 544 Back River Neck Road not for publication

city, town Baltimore vicinity

county Baltimore County

3. Owner of Property

(give names and mailing addresses of all owners)

name Not Available

street and number Not Available

telephone Not Available

city, town Not Available

state MD

zip code Not Available

4. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Baltimore County Courthouse liber Not Available folio Not Available

city, town Towson tax map N/A tax parcel N/A tax ID number Not Available

5. Primary Location of Additional Data

- ☐ Contributing Resource in National Register District
☐ Contributing Resource in Local Historic District
☐ Determined Eligible for the National Register/Maryland Register
☐ Determined Ineligible for the National Register/Maryland Register
☐ Recorded by HABS/HAER
☐ Historic Structure Report or Research Report at MHT
☐ Other:

6. Classification

| Category | Ownership | Current Function | Resource Count |
|---|---|--|-------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> district | <input type="checkbox"/> public | <input type="checkbox"/> agriculture | Contributing |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private | <input type="checkbox"/> landscape | Noncontributing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> structure | <input type="checkbox"/> both | <input type="checkbox"/> commerce/trade | <input type="checkbox"/> buildings |
| <input type="checkbox"/> site | | <input type="checkbox"/> defense | <input type="checkbox"/> sites |
| <input type="checkbox"/> object | | <input type="checkbox"/> domestic | <input type="checkbox"/> structures |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> education | <input type="checkbox"/> objects |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> funerary | <input type="checkbox"/> Total |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> government | |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> health care | |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> industry | |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> recreation/culture | |
| | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religion | |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> social | |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> transportation | |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> work in progress | |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> unknown | |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> vacant/not in use | |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> other: | |

Number of Contributing Resources
previously listed in the Inventory

1

7. Description

Inventory No. BA-2205

Condition

| | |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> excellent | <input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good | <input type="checkbox"/> ruins |
| <input type="checkbox"/> fair | <input type="checkbox"/> altered |

Prepare both a one paragraph summary and a comprehensive description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

Built in 1928, this church fronts east with a parish hall to the northwest and is surrounded by a paved parking lot. Standing two-stories high and three-bays-wide this rock-faced concrete structure has a three-story tower projecting from the façade. The third story of the square tower is wood frame and pierced with two pointed-arch louvered vents on all four sides. The first-story of the tower contains the main entry with a Colonial Revival door hood that is pedimented. The double-leaf wood door is paneled with lights with molded wood surrounds and stained glass transom. Two 1/1 windows pierce the façade of the main block with flat concrete lintels and concrete lug sills. In the end of the asphalt-shingled front gable roof is a half-round louvered vent. The four-bay-deep church is divided with buttresses. Piercing the wide eaves are two exterior-end brick chimneys. A one-story ell spans the width of the rear elevation and features a stepped parapet roof.

Located to the northwest is a circa 1928 parish hall with a circa 1950 addition. The original part of the hall is constructed with rock-faced concrete block and has a flat roof. The four-bays of this building are divided with buttresses. A two-story stretcher bond brick addition with a flat roof was placed on the front.

8. Significance

Inventory No. BA-2205

| Period | Areas of Significance | Check and justify below | | | |
|---|--|---|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699 | <input type="checkbox"/> agriculture | <input type="checkbox"/> economics | <input type="checkbox"/> health/medicine | <input type="checkbox"/> performing arts | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799 | <input type="checkbox"/> archeology | <input type="checkbox"/> education | <input type="checkbox"/> industry | <input type="checkbox"/> philosophy | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899 | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> invention | <input type="checkbox"/> politics/government | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-1999 | <input type="checkbox"/> art | <input type="checkbox"/> entertainment/ recreation | <input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religion | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2000- | <input type="checkbox"/> commerce | <input type="checkbox"/> ethnic heritage | <input type="checkbox"/> law | <input type="checkbox"/> science | |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> communications | <input type="checkbox"/> exploration/ settlement | <input type="checkbox"/> literature | <input type="checkbox"/> social history | |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> community planning | | <input type="checkbox"/> maritime history | <input type="checkbox"/> transportation | |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> conservation | | <input type="checkbox"/> military | <input type="checkbox"/> other: | |

Specific dates 1928-present **Architect/Builder** Unknown

Construction dates 1928

Evaluation for:

☐ National Register

☐ Maryland Register

☒ not evaluated

Prepare a one-paragraph summary statement of significance addressing applicable criteria, followed by a narrative discussion of the history of the resource and its context. (For compliance projects, complete evaluation on a DOE Form – see manual.)

The Back River United Methodist Church was constructed in 1928 in the vicinity of Essex on the Middle River Neck east of Baltimore City and is representative of the suburban development of eastern Baltimore County. The land to the east of Baltimore remained predominantly rural through the mid-19th century, and historic atlases indicate that the town of Essex consisted of farmland occupied by B.E. Cook in 1877. The majority of the land was owned, however, by members of the Taylor family. Eastern and Mace Avenues were unimproved through the late 19th century across the Back River Neck between the Back and Middle Rivers.¹ In the early 20th century, the land between Baltimore and the Middle River was still largely agrarian. At this time, a streetcar line extended to the northeast from Baltimore along Eastern Avenue.² The community known as Essex was born in 1908 out of the development of land near the intersection of Eastern and Mace Avenues by the Taylor Land Company. The first dwelling constructed in the newly developed town was constructed shortly thereafter. Although schools, public services and religious institutions were established in Essex in the 1910s, the community's growth did not increase rapidly. The 1915 county atlas indicates that few structures existed on the city blocks created by the Taylor Land Company's survey of the area.³ The town's development accelerated after the 1919 establishment of the Eastern Rolling Mill near the Essex community. The mill quickly became one of the primary employers in the area around the Back River. Worker housing quickly sprang up on the undeveloped lots that were part of the Paradise Resurveyed plat.⁴

¹ George J. Martinak, "A Short History of Essex and Middle River" TMs (Photocopy), Department of English, Essex Community College, Essex, Maryland (May 1963), pp. 3-11; see also *Atlas of Baltimore County, Maryland* (Philadelphia, PA: G. M. Hopkins, 1877).

² Martinak, p. 13.

³ Martinak, pp. 11-17; see also *Map of Baltimore County* (Philadelphia, PA: G. W. Bromley, 1915).

⁴ Brooks and Rockel, 326.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Inventory No. BA-2205

- Atlas of Baltimore County, Maryland*. Philadelphia, PA: G. M. Hopkins, 1877.
Baltimore County Historic Inventory.
Brooks, Neal A. and Eric G. Rockel. *A History of Baltimore County*. Towson, MD: Friends of the Towson Library, Inc., 1979.
Map of Baltimore County. Philadelphia, PA: G. W. Bromley, 1915.
Scharf, J. Thomas. *History of Baltimore City and County From the Earliest Period to the Present Day: Including Biographical Sketches of Their Representative Men*. Philadelphia, PA: Louis H. Everts, 1881. Reprinted by Higginson Book Company, Salem, MA.
Sidney, J. C. *Map of the City and County of Baltimore, Maryland, from Original Surveys*. Baltimore, MD: James M. Stephens, 1850.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of surveyed property .50 Acre
Acreage of historical setting Unknown
Quadrangle name Middle River Quadrangle scale: 1:24,000

Verbal boundary description and justification

Since its construction in 1928, the Back River United Methodist Church has been associated with the parcel of land at 544 Back River Neck Road in the Fifteenth District.

11. Form Prepared by

| | | | |
|-----------------|---|-----------|--------------|
| name/title | A. McDonald and A. Didden, Architectural Historians | | |
| organization | EHT Tracerics, Incorporated | date | May 29, 2001 |
| street & number | 1121 5th Street NW | telephone | 202.393.1199 |
| city or town | Washington | state | DC |

The Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 supplement.

The survey and inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

return to: Maryland Historical Trust
DHCD/DHCP
100 Community Place
Crownsville, MD 21032-2023
410-514-7600



4353

(GUNPOWDER NECK 5762 IV SE)

4351

4350

17'30"

4349

BA-2005
544 BACK RIVER NECK LONG
BALTIMORE
BALTIMORE COUNTY

USGS Quad: MIDDLE RIVER
Scale: 1:24,000
N



BA-2205

544 BLACK RIVER NECK ROAD

BALTIMORE

BALTIMORE COUNTY, MD

TRAILER

1/2009

MD SHPD

SE CORNER

1 of 5



BA-2205

544 BACK RIVER NECK ROAD

BALTIMORE COUNTY MD

BALTIMORE

TRAILBIES

4/2001

MD-STRD

NE CORNER

2 & 5



BA-2205

544 BACK RIVER NECK ROAD

BALTIMORE

BALTIMORE COUNTY MD

TRAILERIES

4/2001

MD STATE

NW CORNER

3 of 5



BA-2205

544 BALK LIVER PECK ROAD

BALTIMORE COUNTY, MD

TRACER 105

4/2001

IND-STAB

SE CORNER

PARISH HALL

4 of 5



BA-2205

514 BACK RIVER NECK ROAD

BALTIMORE

BALTIMORE COUNTY, MD

TRACERIES

4/2001

MD-STPD

SW CORNER PARISH HALL

3 of 5

BA- 2205

BACK RIVER UNITED METHODIST CHURCH - 1928 - West side of Back River Neck Road opposite Cape May Road. Small church in vernacular style with gable roof and square belfry, entirely built of rusticated concrete block. Perched on a high basement. The cornerstone reads "1888-1928."